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ECONOMIC GROWTH

(Energy and Environment)

Sibugay 'Unified Fisheries Ordinance' implementation before year ends

By Antonio M. Manaytay / MindaNews contributor

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IPIL, Zamboanga Sibugay (MindaNews/20 Apr) -- A unified ordinance for "the management, conservation, utilization and protection of the coastal and marine resources" of 13 coastal towns of the province is expected to be operational before the year ends.

This was the assessment of Cleto Nanola, the regional coastal resource management specialist of EcoGov (Philippine Environmental Governance 2 Project). EcoGov, funded by the United States Assistance for International Development (USAID), provides technical assistance to local government units in the management of the environment, namely: Forest and Forest Land Management (FFM), Urban Environment Management (UEM), and Coastal Resource Management (CRM).

Nanola said he is "hopeful that the Unified Fisheries Ordinance (UFO) will be implemented in the province by last quarter of this year".

"A number of the coastal local government units are now conducting public hearings on the unified ordinance," he revealed.

Among of the 13 coastal towns, according to Nanola, Kabasalan town is "ahead in the conduct of their public hearing" on the unified ordinance.

Once operationalized, Sibugay will join other areas with UFOs: Illana Bay in Pagadian City, Panguil Bay in Ozamiz City, and Lanuza Bay in Surigao City.

The UFO seeks to unify the efforts of the coastal local government units "to jointly implement and enforce the unified ordinance and work together within their common coastal ecosystem" to maximize resources in achieving food security as the overriding consideration in the utilization, management, development, conservation and protection of the common fishery resources.

The concept of a unified fisheries code was first broached during the First Coastal Resource Management Summit of the province conducted by EcoGov last 2006 in order to protect the deteriorating marine life in the nine coastal municipalities of the province along Sibuguey and Dumanquillas Bay. These areas are threatened due to unabated dynamite and sinamay fishing, intrusion by big commercial fishing boats, and presence of pirates.

Last year, Nanola was quoted as saying that the unified ordinance "will be formally adopted by the first quarter of 2008".

"A number of things have cropped up at the level of the 13 local government units that hinder the speedy adoption of the ordinance," Nanola explained, but was quick to add that "definitely, the ordinance will be implemented this year".

Nanola said the formulation, implementation and enforcement of the UFO is necessary to minimize the damage, if not eradicate, the threat to the marine resources of the province.

The EcoGov, he said, is looking forward to an improved system of management, conservation, and utilization and protection of the coastal and marine resources of the province once this unified ordinance will be adopted".

It is also expected that illegal activities will be minimized, increased revenues for the local governments from fisheries, and formal zoning of municipal waters. Zoning means that the municipal waters will be classified and marked according to use such as there will be specific zones for agar-agar, mariculture, protected area, recreational, navigation, and others. (Antonio M. Manaytay / MindaNews contributor)